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NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Johnny Weldon Richardson, III, age 28, of Onancock, Virginia, was sentenced to 195 months in federal prison in the U.S. District Court in Norfolk yesterday on a charge of possession of a firearm and ammunition on the Eastern Shore. Richardson was arrested on a federal complaint in Accomack County in November 2003. He pled guilty in December 2003 to a criminal information charging him with possession of a firearm and ammunition as an armed career criminal, an offense carrying a mandatory minimum of 15 years and a maximum of life. An armed career criminal is someone who possesses a firearm or ammunition after having been convicted of at least three violent or drug trafficking felony offenses.

The original federal charge arose out of an arrest of Richardson on June 1, 2003, in Accomack County, by a Virginia State Trooper who stopped him for a minor vehicle tag violation. Richardson was also driving on a suspended license and was wanted in Delaware for a probation violation. He initially faced state charges in Accomack County. The case was referred for federal prosecution under Project EXILE.

Project EXILE is a multi-agency joint federal and state task force targeting armed criminals for prosecution in federal court for possession or use of firearms in violation of federal laws. It is a part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, a nationwide effort by the Department of Justice aimed at reducing violent crimes. Since its inception in Hampton Roads in late 1997, Project EXILE has produced over 806 convictions and removed over 1473 firearms from armed criminals.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and task force agents working with the Virginia State Police. The case was prosecuted for the United States by Assistant United States Attorney James A. Metcalfe.

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